

Inspection report for Kingsland Children's Centre

Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	367823
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Glover

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Linda Dunn
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Kingsland Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Kingsland Kindergarten Ltd

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, health professionals, local community partners, parent participation board members, local authority representatives, user groups, parents, carers and children who use the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its business plans, safeguarding procedures, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

Information about the centre

Kingsland Children's Centre is a phase one centre and was designated in April 2006. The centre is co-located on a complex with Kingsland Maintained Nursery School, Kingsland C of E Primary School and Kingsland Kindergarten Limited. The majority of services are housed in a purpose-built building situated in a residential area. The centre is governed and managed directly by the local authority with a manager specifically responsible for this locality. A new senior management team is in place following a recent restructure. There are 891 children aged from birth to five years, 75% of these children have accessed at least one service provided by the centre. The majority of families are White British and the remainder are from a number of different minority ethnic groups. The economic position of families is low. The centre serves an inner-city community, which is in one of the 10% most deprived wards in the country. Unemployment rates are above the national average, due to the closure of the manufacturing industries and the demise of the local businesses. Unemployment in the area is exceptionally high at 49% and there is history of significant generational unemployment. A high proportion of adults have few or no qualifications.

The centre provides a base for a range of health, education and social services that take place not only on the site, but also in the home and in local community venues. Children enter school with lower than expected Early Years Foundation Stage score. There are three registered local childminders in the reach area who provide additional childcare. The local authority manages the provision and works with the parent partnership board, which is made up of representatives of all partner organisations, and parents. There has been no full-time centre teacher in post since April 2011.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Kingsland Children’s Centre provides a satisfactory service for local families, effectively helping those who use it to improve the outcomes for their children. Due to changes in leadership and staff the centre is experiencing a period of transition. There are now dedicated teams in place to support family services, as well as play and learning support. Parents, children and families value the support and guidance offered by the centre and a number state that it has changed their lives. Outcomes are now being tracked through e-start and managers are able to use this data to assess not only the use of current services but also its impact.

Staff work hard with families and provide a consistent and friendly approach that help them to find solutions, either directly or via partners to provide the specialist support required. Through appropriate care, guidance and support, families are able to access a wide range of services, which provide them with helpful information about parenting, breastfeeding, healthy eating and exercise. Adult learning and vocational courses have been popular and those attending have been well supported to gain a range of skills to aid their future employment prospects. Parents value the parenting courses, which they say have developed their confidence in managing their children’s behaviour and providing a calmer environment in the home. For the most vulnerable families, outreach work has been effective in bringing together a range of agencies to offer a coordinated package of support.

Safeguarding arrangements protect children, families and users satisfactorily. All staff and volunteers have been trained in safeguarding procedures. Access to the children's centre is through a shared reception area, which is locked at all times. Once in the reception, access to most of the centre is through locked doors, which require the use of electronic key fobs to open them. For many of those interviewed this was seen as a safeguarding strength; however, some users stated that this was a barrier. The reception area is not seen as welcoming and for many parents this is also a potential barrier to accessing services.

Equality and diversity is promoted satisfactorily within the centre and with users. The centre has positive images and information displayed all around to promote difference and understanding. Play sessions are often planned around festivals and world-wide traditional games and songs. There are weekly 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) play and learning sessions for children who have been identified with developmental delays or additional needs. One carer attending these sessions stated, 'the staff supported us in finding a diagnosis and taught us that she was still precious regardless of her capabilities'. The centre does not have a strategic target to address the small numbers of fathers participating in activities. The centre is limited by the lack of analysis of data about the profile of the reach area. Data are not analysed sufficiently to identify or used to inform future provision or services.

The centre has some commitment to partnership working. Professionals from different agencies work well with centre staff to identify and provide services quickly for users. The health visiting team are located within the centre itself while other services use the centre each week to provide sessions and activities. Teams, providing different aspects of support, are beginning to work together to provide seamless provision for families and young children. The systems for sharing information about all children's needs or the long-term impact of the centre's work are not yet fully embedded. Therefore, the sharing of information between all agencies to build up a complete picture of the unique child is not yet fully in place. Although there are signs of good improvement for some individuals, a more formalised and consistent approach to capturing information, actions and outcomes is required.

Research and developmental work with the wider community has been unsatisfactory. However, a new economic and community development team leader has correctly identified issues and has developed innovative plans to address the needs of the local community, although it is too soon to judge the impact. The centre senior management team are fully aware of the work that is needed to improve services and have already set actions in place to address this. Users who have had a lengthy involvement with centre services speak enthusiastically about the difference the support and activities have made to their lives and how their aspirations have been raised. There is an active parent participation board that is made up of 50% parents and 50% professionals. Parents effectively put forward their views and have begun to collate the views of other parents across the reach area. However, these parents have not accessed a range of training that will empower them for this role

and be able to effectively challenge decisions and plans.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a new senior team in place, but with ongoing consultation about future provision and cuts, the centre is in a period of uncertainty and transition. The new senior team demonstrate that they have a full understanding of the developmental needs of the centre and already have appropriate action plans to sustain and further improve its capacity. Centre business and development plans are informed by the analysis of data collated nationally and locally, however, these lack clarity and do not identify time-bound challenging targets to address issues. The centre is not able to clearly identify and demonstrate the impact of their services on outcomes for children and families. This has affected the centre's ability to set sufficiently well-focused and ambitious targets. Consequently, the centre's ability for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the collection and analysis of data to monitor the effectiveness of all the centres services and activities and link development planning more robustly to outcomes.
- Embed systems and practices for maintaining learning journeys and family files that ensure all information is detailed, actioned and reviewed to provide the best possible range of integrated services to meet individual needs.
- In consultation, review the children's centre self-evaluation and development plans to include challenging targets against local and strategic priorities so progress towards these targets can be effectively measured over time.
- Support the parent participation board to improve their ability to evaluate the impact of the centre's multi-agency work by using information from evaluation to ensure services provided meet the needs of this community, particularly for the most vulnerable.
- Identify training opportunities to support the parents' participation board to provide leadership and direction to help them work more effectively on improving the range and quality of activities.
- Increase the numbers of fathers and male carers who engage with the centre to ensure that this group is better represented.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Health professionals effectively work from the centre to ensure that families can access their services. As a result, clinics, such as the health visitor drop-in, are well attended. Breastfeeding is promoted throughout the centre with a breastfeeding café each week run by a voluntary group called 'Mum to Mum' who provide group and individual peer support sessions to encourage mums to continue to breastfeed. It is not clear how effective this support is as data and feedback are not sufficiently

analysed by the centre. Baby massage sessions are offered by the centre staff, which parents and carers report have helped them to feel more confident in their parenting. Parents enjoy the 'cook and eat' sessions and state that they are using more fresh ingredients to produce healthy and low-cost meals. The reach has a high percentage of mothers who smoke during pregnancy and, although most staff have been trained in smoking cessation, more research and analysis are needed to better plan for the future.

Adults and children feel safe when using the centre and its services. Robust security procedures are in place and adhered to by the centre. However, for some staff and families the locked doors and uninviting reception area are seen as a barrier. Once through the reception there are still a number of locked doors to go through to access services which makes moving around the centre difficult. There are no drop-in facilities or a place for families and children to sit and chat or provide support for each other. The resources held by the centre are good and they could be used more innovatively to provide more friendly and accessible space to play and learn. There are risk assessments in place for all activities and outreach work. The centre follows all appropriate procedures set out by the local authority. Early identification of need is established effectively through the use of the Common Assessment Framework, and support is appropriately coordinated from a range of agencies to support vulnerable children and families.

Centre staff work with the co-located maintained nursery and up until April had a full-time teacher working with the centre on promoting an effective transition programme. Data collected demonstrated that this support had an impact on outcomes for children during initial testing and raising scores year-on-year. It is unclear how the centre will now track and monitor the Early Years Foundation Stage and manage the transition to schools. There is a private nursery on site but there have been missed opportunities to work with them and share best practice. Parents and carers say that when they attend courses, they are confident to leave their children with well-trained play and learning workers. They say they know that they are able to focus on their own learning as the children will be safe and well cared for. Sessions are effectively planned to support children's development based on the Early Years Foundation Stage. Observations are undertaken during sessions and useful feedback provided to parents. However, the centre does not sufficiently record, monitor and track children's progress over time to demonstrate the impact of its provision on outcomes. There is an extensive toy and book library, which is not used effectively by staff, parents, carers or childminders.

The centre has a number of volunteers who provide support for the reception desk and sit on the board. The centre is looking at new and innovative ways of recruiting and training volunteers for the future. There are a small number of apprentices working within the centre either in business administration or play and learning teams.

The centre provides support for parents and carers in developing skills for the future through the local YMCA Start-Up programme. This provides extensive information,

advice and guidance on successfully entering or returning to work. The programme consists of a wide range of empowering courses from self-development, confidence building, basic skills, first aid and writing CVs, to support in gaining employment locally. One parent stated that they had been so low and depressed after having her second baby she did not think she would ever get help with her mathematics and English. She accessed programmes starting with a confidence building course and has now successfully completed a literacy course. 'I can now read a bedtime story to my three-year-old with confidence, I never thought I would ever be able to do that, how clever am I?'

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

3

Initial priorities have focused on developing infrastructure support and this provides a firm platform to encourage users to participate in other activities. Family support workers visit the most vulnerable in their homes and provide good support and guidance helping them with a range of complex needs and issues. Partnership working, based upon accurate assessment of children's needs, is used well to ensure that appropriate multi-agency support is provided for families in need. Existing users value these services. They are able to comment on their improved confidence socially and also when managing their children's behaviour. As a result of these interventions, one parent stated, 'this support has turned my life round and made me a better parent, I am happier so therefore my children are'.

A range of adult learning opportunities is available and user evaluations show that they are enjoying their learning. Classes, which promote development of parents' and carers' skills, are well attended with the 'Triple P' programme being that currently on offer. Activities to promote speech and language development are offered through the therapists and 'Every Child a Talker' is promoted throughout. There are no sessions currently run in collaboration with other professionals and therefore there is little sharing of best practice. There are many missed opportunities

to learn from each other and to effectively feed into one holistic learning journey or care plan for families and individuals. There are no sessions co-delivered with either of the nurseries on site or with other professionals. The private provider felt that there was little, if any, sharing of information about children on transition, however, they are now planning meetings agreed with the centre manager to address this.

Relationships with parents are extremely positive. Parents and carers are confident to talk with staff about any concerns because they know they will receive practical and emotional support. Stay and play is a popular session and the facilities and resources are good. Work with vulnerable children and families is good, however, this is not always recorded sufficiently to demonstrate aims, objectives and outcomes over time. Many families have received support over extended periods of time, some for years with no targets or outcomes identified on their files. There is a fine line between developing a culture of dependency and one of empowerment, and this has been identified as a training need for all staff in agreement with the new centre manager.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory with an innovative new management team in place. As a team they demonstrate a huge commitment to changing the life chances of families and children within their reach. The local authority provides regular support and is developing their role of challenging and holding the centre to account for the effectiveness of action planning to address recognised issues. The new senior management team have recognised the centres strengths, and areas for development, and team meetings have already begun to implement new agreed strategies and objectives. There are now clear lines of responsibility and staff value the supervision sessions that are providing them with opportunities to discuss and seek guidance on complex cases. Staff working in administrative and financial roles understand their responsibilities and how they contribute to the centre's work. The centre provides satisfactory value for money.

The centre's accommodation is not currently used to maximum effect with rooms and areas being empty or unused for much of the day. The senior managers have identified this as a priority area for development. They have also recognised that the

centre itself, including reception, is not easily accessible which is perceived as a barrier to many accessing services. The centre is provided with extensive data available through e-start from the local authority. This information is not sufficiently used to analyse uptake and impact of services on users, nor does it feed into an otherwise comprehensive self-evaluation form and business plan. There is no current analysis of the impact and outcomes of those partners providing services from the centre. The senior management team have recognised this and training on the use of data is planned.

Safeguarding of users is satisfactorily. All the local authority recruitment and practice requirements are followed. All staff and volunteers are subject to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, including those from agencies who work with centre users. Robust systems are in place to ensure the safety of lone workers. All board members and volunteers have access to safeguarding training.

The information displayed in the centre promotes equality and diversity well. The centre is accessible for people with disabilities and the centre offers well-equipped and resourced crèche facilities for children with additional needs. Equality and diversity are embedded well in all the centre's policies and practices and follow the local authority policies and guidelines. The centre does not have a plan or target in place for working with fathers. Some extensive higher level research has been undertaken by senior staff around the engagement of fathers but this has not been used to inform either policy or practice. Although there is one prominent male volunteer working in the centre, data highlight the low levels of fathers and carers who currently access services.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	3
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been	3

commissioned to provide	
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	3

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Kingsland Children's Centre on 23–24 May 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We know from the discussions we had with you that you are pleased with the services that you access. You think that the centre staff work hard to help you improve your skills and confidence as parents and to promote healthy lifestyles. We heard how much you and your children enjoyed the 'messy monster' activities and how attending the 'Triple P' programme made you feel you could manage your relationships better.

You told us how much you gained from attending the Start-Up sessions, slowly building confidence over time, and for some of you to gaining employment. You told us how much you have gained from attending the 'stay and play' sessions and how these enable you to meet people. Some of you felt that the security to get into the children's centre was a barrier and that there were too many locked doors to get through. You value the crèche facilities, which enable you to have peace of mind that your children are well cared for while you learn. The activities and courses offered by the centre are helping you to develop skills, which are useful to you when you are ready to start work. We heard how your confidence in your own abilities has grown and how some of you are using these skills to support others in the centre.

Arrangements are in place for keeping everyone safe when they are at the centre. All the partner agencies attached to the centre work well together. This means that when you and your families do have difficulties you are soon provided with the help and support you need to improve the situation.

Some of you sit on the parent participation board and are able to share your views about what services should be provided. We asked the centre to find out what further training can be offered to parents who sit on the board to help them understand their roles better and ask the right questions.

We asked the centre to improve what it writes in family files and children's learning journeys so we can see what everybody has agreed to do and look at what happens along the way. The centre needs to use the information supplied by the local authority to assess how well it is performing and what it needs to do in the future to increase the number of families who use the centre's services.

We have also asked the board and the local authority to review more thoroughly all the information available to demonstrate how well the centre is helping you and your children. This will help to set the priorities for the centre's work in the future.

Thank you to everybody who took the time to come and speak with us or provided information for us. We are very grateful for your involvement in the inspection and wish you every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.